



Aristide speaking at the launch of Fanmi Lavalas, Jacmel, November 1996

Photo by Leah Gordon

## Scale of Lavalas victory questioned

The May 21st elections returned a huge victory for Jean-Bertrand Aristide's new, populist, Lavalas Family party. According to the official results, the Lavalas Family won 18 out of 19 Senate seats (the other went to an independent), 26 out of 83 seats for the House of Deputies, 80 of the 115 town mayoralties, and 321 of 485 rural and town councils.

Voters turned out in force – over 60% of those registered – to once again show their faith in Aristide. His party's victory owed much to

the mobilising efforts of young Lavalas Family activists across the country, but also to the fact that, in contrast to the other parties contesting the election, it actually had a coherent political campaign. While the Lavalas Family promised better education, support for agricultural production, and improved security, its opponents – ranging from the U.S.-favoured social democrat coalition (Espace de Concertation), to the fundamentalist Protestants' party (Mochrena) and the Duvalier

supporters' group (MPSN) – offered voters little more than their virulent hatred of Aristide.

Both international and local observers gave the elections a clean bill of health, save for some minor irregularities on the day, and some chaotic scenes at numerous vote-counting offices in the days that followed. However, as the magnitude of their defeat became apparent, the losing parties seized on a number of incidents of fraud and intimidation, and the arrests by police of around a dozen of their candidates. They claimed this was evidence of a Lavalas Family conspiracy to establish a totalitarian, one-party state. Almost imme-

diately after the elections, the main anti-Lavalas parties formed an alliance, the Convergence Group, to announce their intention to boycott the second round of voting.

Then, while the official results were still being processed, the Organisation of American States (OAS) election observation mission in Haiti boosted the opposition's claims, and outraged Lavalas Family supporters by announcing that the Haitian electoral council (CEP) was using the wrong method to calculate the percentages for the Senate results. The OAS, supported by the U.S. administration, asked the CEP to recalculate the results using a different method – a move that would reduce the number of Senate seats won by the Lavalas Family in the first round by over a half. The CEP countered that the OAS was not entitled to decide on internal electoral matters, and, that in any case, the CEP was using the same method as in previous elections, and no one had complained before.

In mid-June, two of the nine CEP members, both of **page 2** ➤

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< page 1 them Espace de Concertation nominees, resigned. A few days later, the CEP president, Léon Manus, went into exile in mysterious circumstances. From the U.S. he claimed he had fled in fear of Lavalas Family's threats, after changing his mind and deciding he agreed with the OAS complaints. The Haitian government shrugged off growing international criticism, and the rump CEP pressed ahead with a second round for the remaining forty-six undecided Deputy seats. The OAS monitoring mission refused to observe these elections on the basis that it did not accept the first round results.

Meanwhile, the opposition Convergence Group's boycott call went largely unheeded by their own candidates who believed they had a chance in head-to-head Deputy contests with the Lavalas Family. However, the elections on July 9th were marked by a perhaps understandably much lower level of voter participation than in May.

As we go to press, the results of the second round have not been published, but it seems likely the Lavalas Family will win enough seats to have a majority in the House of Deputies, and thus enjoy total control of the Parliament. The legitimacy of this new Parliament, not to mention of the town mayors and local councils, is however seriously damaged by recent statements by members of the international community.

The OAS, the U.S. and Canada have threatened to withhold \$500 million of aid, and the European Union has threatened to suspend its development programme, if ten of the Senate contests are not re-run. The Haitian government has responded bullishly, arguing that the CEP, and only the CEP, makes decisions about elections. The Prime Minister remarked it would make little difference if the international community cuts aid because Haiti had not been receiving much for the last few years anyway. Meanwhile, emboldened by the international response, the opposition Convergence Group has called for President Préval to resign, and for completely new elections to be held. ■

# Election 2000

## It's a Family affair

Haiti's voters confounded all expectations by turning out in force for the May 21st general elections. As was the case in 1990, analysts who predicted a low turnout were left with egg on their faces as nearly two-thirds of the four million registered voters cast their votes. And, just as ten years ago, it appears that the popularity of Jean-Bertrand Aristide was one of the main reasons for the voters' enthusiasm.

Despite the 1991-94 military coup, the lame-duck final year of his Presidency, and four years out of the limelight, it seems that a good many Haitians still believe in Aristide, and in the Lavalas movement for political change with which he is strongly associated. The Aristide 'effect' contributed massively to the Lavalas Family victory, but there were other reasons too. Clearly, Aristide and his party had successfully established an organisational structure and a network of support across the country.

### The opposition parties

The votes for the Lavalas Family can also be seen as a rejection of the opposition parties, which had done little to inspire any confidence or respect in recent years. In particular, the electorate deserted the Struggling People's Organisation (OPL) in spectacular fashion. The OPL had been the main winner in the last general elections in 1995, and, as a result, had enjoyed a majority in the Parliament, and led the government in 1996/97. For this reason, most of its former supporters negatively associated it with four years of mis-government, and held it responsible for blocking the work of the Parliament since mid-1997.

The much-hyped Espace de Concertation coalition enjoyed the attentions of the international media, and the financial support of U.S. and French backers in the election run-up, but, come the day, foreign friends were not enough to persuade any significant numbers of voters that this group was anything other than a bunch of

visionless opportunists.

The only opposition group to come out of the election with any credit was the new Mochrena party – a creation of the increasingly prominent right-wing Protestant evangelical churches in Haiti. Unlike the other opposition parties, which are vehicles for individual's political aspirations or intellectual talking shops, and as a result are detached from the ordinary people, Mochrena does seem to enjoy extensive and genuine support.

### Violence and fraud

Again confounding the pundits, the elections passed off with little of the predicted violence. Most polling stations were orderly, and voters could cast their votes without any obvious sign of intimidation. There were, though, enough anecdotal reports of incidents after the polling stations closed to suggest that Lavalas Family party members did take part in fraudulent practices, such as discarding opposition ballot papers and altering the return forms, and that these acts did inflate the size of their party's victory. The arrests of numerous opposition party members by the police in the days after the election also indicated that parts of the National Police force are indeed working on behalf of the Aristide party.

Although these incidents should not diminish the fact that the majority of voters backed the Lavalas Family, the apparent determination of the party to win as many seats as possible, by fair means or foul, does raise some worrying concerns: A little over a year ago, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, when speaking to the editor of *Haiti Briefing*, confirmed that there were many bad elements, such as criminals, including drug-dealers, and even Duvalierists, who had climbed aboard the Lavalas Family bandwagon. Aristide said he was not unduly worried because he had no doubt that, come the elections, the savvy and sophisticated electorate would reject any unsavoury characters

*Haiti Briefing* editor, **Charles Arthur**, who was an international election monitor in Haiti in May, analyses the Lavalas Family victory

REPUBLIQUE D'HAÏTI ELEKSYON 2000										SENATÈ									
DEPATMAN SANT																			
PAUL FRANÇOIS DESTINE	YVES DORCE	JEAN MARCELIN BENOÎTE CASSEUS	SIMON HIESSOU DESRAS	PIERRE BENOÎTE MICHEL RENARD	PIERRE PAUL BENOÎTE AUGUSTAVE	MARINO ETIENNE	JOSEPH BENOÎTE JEAN-LOUIS	GREGOIRE JEAN B. GUERRIER	SMITH METELLUS	ESCARNE ROSQUETTE									
MOCHRENA	MOCHRENA	FAMMI LAVALAS	FAMMI LAVALAS	FAMMI LAVALAS	RAMFO	RAMFO	CFD	FRONTIPH	FRONTIPH	RDTP									
3	3	11	11	11	15	15	18	20	20	21									
BEYLOU GEORGES	SHANE DESARMES	SERGE GILLES	SIMONE SYLVESTRE	GARY GUYTEAU	JESSE SALOMON	CARILL JOLLY	LOUIS DESARMES	JEAN SMITH SAINT-LOT	JOSEPH BENOÎTE SYLVAIN										
NIPON	ESPACE	ESPACE	ESPACE	DPL	DPL	TET ANSANN	ENDOPANDAN	ENDOPANDAN	ENDOPANDAN										
23	25	25	25	28	28	31													

A ballot paper for the Central Plateau department with 21 candidates standing for three Senate seats

who stood on a Lavalas Family ticket. In the context of the May 21st Lavalas landslide, one is bound to ask just what type of people ended up being elected.

### What is the Lavalas Family?

Michele Montas of *Haiti Briefing* she was worried that the extent of the Lavalas Family triumph would mean "that we have a number of people in Parliament who I would not want to entrust to make laws." She added, "Some people who ride with the Lavalas Family are really rotten to the core." Montas echoed the fears of many supporters of genuine, participatory democracy in Haiti who believe that Aristide has compromised with array of interest groups, some of which are opponents of a far-reaching

economic and political transformation. For example, Reginald Boulos, a long-time recipient of USAID development funding, and co-owner of the right wing Radio Vision 2000, has often been invited to and has attended Lavalas Family functions.

One notable feature of the election was the number of former Haitian Army members standing for the Lavalas Family. According to the CEP's official results, three former officers were elected Lavalas Family Senators, and Marie-Yves Poupponeau Duperval, the wife of a former Haitian Army chief of staff, was the party's victorious candidate for Mayor in the capital, Port-au-Prince. Apologists will say that none of them were leaders of the 1991 coup, and suggest that the inclusion of these

people in important Lavalas Family positions is a form of pay-back negotiated by Aristide, dating from 1995 when he disbanded the Haitian Army. In any case, after what happened in 1991, perhaps Aristide is wise to reach out to a broader constituency. Others, though, wonder how, with friends like this, the Lavalas Family can really be a party that represents the rural and urban poor.

Patrick Elie, Minister of the Interior under Aristide in 1991, told *Haiti Briefing* he agreed that there were all sorts of tendencies within the Lavalas Family – some progressive, some reactionary. For this reason, he believes that concerns about a lack of an opposition are unfounded because in the near future the Lavalas Family party itself will split apart. ■

**One man, one vote - except when you can vote twice (or three times) on one ballot paper**

### How the OAS and the CEP fail to see eye-to-eye

The 1999 electoral law clearly states that, to be elected Senator or Deputy outright in the first round election, a candidate must score 50% + one of the votes cast. If no candidate wins this percentage, then the two highest scoring candidates must contest the seat in a second round run-off.

However, a serious problem arises when, as for the May 21st elections, there were two Senate seats up for election in each of eight departments (and three in the Central Plateau). Voters were presented with only one ballot paper, and were supposed to mark their two preferred candidates (three in the Central Plateau). The question, which the electoral law does not address, is how to calculate the percentages when dealing with such ballot papers?

The Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) decided to use the same method used in 1990 and 1995, when there were also simultaneous multiple Senate elections, and only factored in the highest scoring candidates. Some weeks after the election, while votes were still being counted, the Organisation of American States (OAS) electoral monitoring mission in Haiti announced that the CEP was calculating the Senate percentages the wrong way. The OAS claimed that the CEP method unfairly favoured the highest scoring candidates (in every case, Lavalas Family candidates), and penalised all the other candidates. It proposed that the calculations be redone to include all the votes cast.

### Comment

Neither method is perfect. The CEP method does undoubtedly favour the highest scoring candidates, making it easy for them to score 50% + one,

and so avoid a run-off, and it does discard the many tens of thousands of votes cast for less popular parties. On the other hand, this method is in keeping with the spirit of the law, if not the letter, as it does identify an outright winner unless there was a very close-run race. As for the OAS method, it inflates the importance of the minor party votes, making it difficult for a candidate to win outright in the first round.

The most compelling defence put by the CEP is that they used the same method as in previous elections, and that, if there were going to be changes, they should have been made before, not in the middle of counting. As has been pointed out, the OPL won its Senate seats in 1995 with this same method, and only complained when it became clear that it had not won any seats in the May 2000 elections.

The OAS has not explained why it failed to notice the potential for vote calculation confusion before the election took place. One might also ask what the U.S.-funded International Foundation for Election Systems was doing in Haiti with its US\$8 million grant if it was not looking at the vote calculation method for the most important election in Haiti for over four years.

### Other opinions

Most media reports on the issue have slavishly followed the OAS argument, and perpetuated the opposition parties' claim that the Lavalas Family has 'stolen' the election. *Haiti Briefing* here presents two different views: ■ NOAH (the National Organisation for the Advancement of Haitians), an advocacy group based in Washington DC, in a June 18th press release, called the OAS criticism of the method used to calculate the Senate results "an

attempt to tarnish the legitimacy of the victory of Haitian people. Even if there is some remote validity in the (OAS) arguments...the proper methodology should have been stipulated before, and not after the elections."

NOAH pointed out "that the OAS and the international community were deeply involved in the preparation of the elections, therefore they were aware of the methodology used in the previous elections in Haiti, and it should not be considered as a surprise or an unprecedented action....The Haitian community, the people of Haiti are asking why the international community has chosen to initiate that debate right after their overwhelming mobilization and victory."

■ The Washington-based think-tank, the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, in a July 13th press release, commented:

"Squabbling over a technicality in Haiti's May 21st parliamentary elections – the reversal of which ultimately would not have resulted in any major difference to the winners of the 19 Senate seats in contention, the OAS refused to observe last Sunday's second-round balloting, once again exposing the regional organisation's shrinking stature..."

"The action to humiliate the Haitian government, led by President René Préval, amounts to an unprincipled scheme to discredit a relatively free and fair election process, given the island's impoverished circumstances. In lockstep manner, the OAS is effortlessly following U.S. policy objectives, which in Haiti consist of preventing at all costs the fulfillment of the will of the vast majority of the country's citizens: the return of former President Aristide to office as the result of next November's presidential ballot." ■



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# Haiti's World Cup dream is over

**A**n exciting few months for Haitian soccer brought the national team close to qualifying for the 2002 World Cup finals. In February, the red and blues gained valuable experience when they qualified for the Gold Cup tournament staged in Miami, Florida. The three-team competition pitted them against Peru and the United States. They lost 0-3 to the U.S., but achieved a creditable 1-1 draw against Peru.

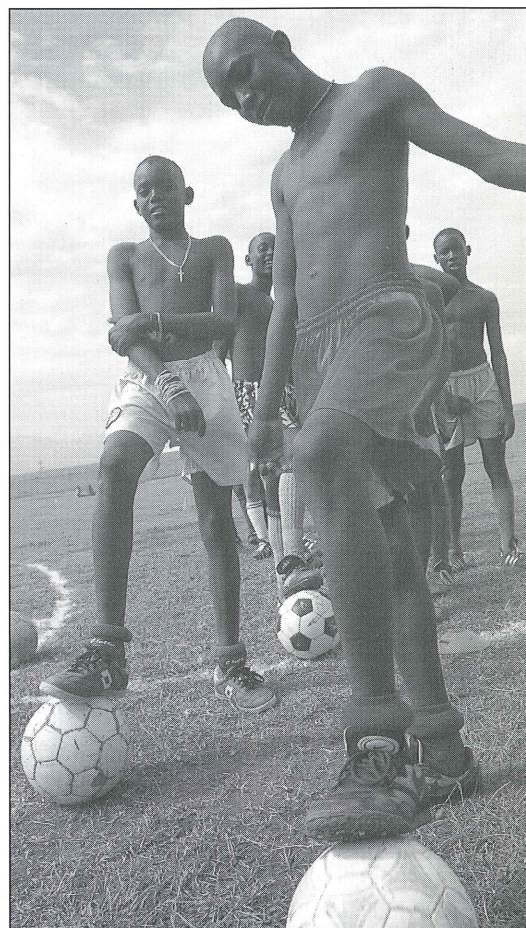
The Caribbean zone World Cup qualifying competition got off to a good start when Haiti beat Dominica 4-0 at home, and then 3-1 away. The next round, in April, was another two-legged affair, this time against the Bahamas. The first leg played in Port-au-Prince's Sylvio Cator stadium saw Haiti thrash the Ba-

hamas 9-0. The return game was another goal feast – Haiti coming out 4-0 victors.

Having negotiated the minnows, Haiti then had to face more serious opposition in the form of Trinidad and Tobago, traditionally one of the strongest Caribbean soccer nations. The first away leg ended in a 1-3 defeat. At home, the Haitian team was unable to turn it around, and could only manage a 1-1 draw. In both matches, Manchester United's star striker, Dwight Yorke scored for Trinidad.

Defeat by Trinidad left Haiti with one last chance to make it to the final qualifying stages. In June, they had two games against Honduras, runners-up from the Central American qualifying group. Sadly, Haiti's form deserted them, and the team went down 4-0 in the first leg in Tegucigalpa. The tie was effectively over, and the return match was another poor performance ending in a 1-3 defeat.

The campaign to qualify for 2002 had failed, but, on the positive side, the team had grown in stature under new coach, Manno Sanon, the hero of 1974, and had uncovered a new star, the midfielder, Sebastien Vorbe, who in April signed for U.S. soccer league team, Los Angeles Galaxy. ■



**Young hopefuls in training at the Athlétique d'Haiti football club – dreaming of a place in the national side**  
Photo by Leah Gordon

## Do you use email?

If you use email, and want more information about what is happening in Haiti, please email the Haiti Support Group on <[haitisupport@gn.apc.org](mailto:haitisupport@gn.apc.org)>.

We will add you to our growing list which receives two or three news or feature articles each week by email. We also use email to inform our supporters about forthcoming events and solidarity campaigns.

## EDINBURGH STAGE SET FOR RAM Vodou Rock from Haiti

**R**AM, the 12-piece Haitian band who mix rock and traditional Vodou rhythms, are playing at this year's Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

RAM is led by Richard Morse, who runs the legendary Hotel Oloffson in downtown Port-au-Prince. He grew up in the New York area, the son of a U.S. academic and a Haitian folk singer and dancer, and, when he arrived in Haiti in 1987, the roots (rasin) music scene was already a few years old. Its leaders were middle class Haitian kids, fed up with the inane and profane compas, a merengue-type Haitian pop. Inspired by Bob Marley, reggae, and Rastafarianism in neighbouring Jamaica, they had

got into Vodou, and especially into Vodou drumming, based on rhythms more or less unchanged in the hundreds of years since West African slaves had been brought to the then French colony.

On this percussive base, rasin groups such as Foula, Boukan Ginen, and Boukman Eksperyans, laid Hendrix and Santana style guitar, and lyrics that both criticised the country's military dictatorships, and praised Haitian peasant culture and beliefs. Morse, with his punk sensibility, added thrashed chords and increasingly cynical lyrics about Haitian politics.

For all his outside influences and worldly concerns, Morse constantly

refers to the importance of Haiti's much maligned and misunderstood Vodou religion. He told *Haiti Briefing*, "Haitian music is and has always been about the Vodou. I find its inspiration endless. Everything from rhythms, to melodies, to messages." Most foreigners can't get beyond the Bond film, "Live and Let Die" representations of Vodou, and nervously joke about putting pins in dolls, but for artists in Haiti it is, as Morse says, a rich source of imagery, colour, movement and rhythm.

RAM's new album, their third, provisionally entitled "Songs from the Last Testament", will, Morse says, be "more extreme. It's more Vodou and more rock. You feel the essence of each genre without feeling compromised." ■

**Venue:**  
**Pleasance Over  
The Road One,  
Edinburgh**  
**Dates:** 2 – 28  
**August**  
(excluding 8 &  
22 Aug)  
**9.10pm (60  
minutes)**  
**Box Office:**  
**Pleasance 0131  
556 6550**  
**For further  
information,  
please call Tim  
McKeough on  
020 7636 3750  
or 07714 205  
948.**